A King Shows Kindness

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: God has extended kindness to His people, and through Christ we enjoy a seat at His table as His children.

MAIN PASSAGE: 2 Samuel 9:1-13

In June of 1990, a woman threw a party at the Hyatt Hotel in downtown Boston. The woman and her fiance had visited the hotel some weeks prior to plan their wedding banquet. The price tag: $13,000, with half required as a down payment. A few days later, however, the groom got cold feet and called off the wedding. When the former bride-to-be was told she could only get ten percent back, she decided to go ahead with the banquet, not for her wedding but as a blowout for the down-and-outs of Boston. Ten years before, she had been living in a homeless shelter; now she had the means to bless the homeless. So she sent invitations to rescue missions and homeless shelters. The night of the party, those used to peeling bits of pizza off cardboard for dinner were treated to hors d’oeuvres, chicken cordon blue, and chocolate wedding cake as they danced the night away.¹

When has someone extended undeserved kindness to you? How did it make you feel? How did you respond?
Group Time

Point 1: The king looks for someone to whom he may show kindness (2 Sam. 9:1-5).

1 David asked, “Is there anyone remaining from the family of Saul I can show kindness to for Jonathan’s sake?” 2 There was a servant of Saul’s family named Ziba. They summoned him to David, and the king said to him, “Are you Ziba?” “I am your servant,” he replied.

3 So the king asked, “Is there anyone left of Saul’s family that I can show the kindness of God to?” Ziba said to the king, “There is still Jonathan’s son who was injured in both feet.”

4 The king asked him, “Where is he?” Ziba answered the king, “You’ll find him in Lo-debar at the house of Machir son of Ammiel.” 5 So King David had him brought from the house of Machir son of Ammiel in Lo-debar.

The king of Israel, powerful, victorious, and blessed by God, was looking for ways to bless and extend kindness to another—to someone from his former rival’s family. In that day, it was customary for a new king to wipe out the former king’s family to reduce the threat of a coup or revenge assassination, not show them kindness. In this we see the depth of David’s character and trust in God. Deep down, he wanted to do good; he wanted to keep his word to bless the house of Saul and to honor his friend, Jonathan.

Where are some places Christians can intentionally seek out opportunities to do good for others?

David sent for Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth, who was lame in both feet. Without regard for the harm or benefit to his kingdom, David planned to show kindness to the grandson of his former enemy, and that kindness would be purely one-sided. David was going to bless and extend kindness to Mephibosheth with no conditions, and there was no way Mephibosheth could repay him.

What wrong motives might guide our good deeds?
Point 2: The king restores a lost estate (2 Sam. 9:6-10).

6 Mephibosheth son of Jonathan son of Saul came to David, fell facedown, and paid homage. David said, “Mephibosheth!” “I am your servant,” he replied.

7 “Don’t be afraid,” David said to him, “since I intend to show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all your grandfather Saul’s fields, and you will always eat meals at my table.”

8 Mephibosheth paid homage and said, “What is your servant that you take an interest in a dead dog like me?”

9 Then the king summoned Saul’s attendant Ziba and said to him, “I have given to your master’s grandson all that belonged to Saul and his family. 10 You, your sons, and your servants are to work the ground for him, and you are to bring in the crops so your master’s grandson will have food to eat. But Mephibosheth, your master’s grandson, is always to eat at my table.” Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

David could have chosen a few servants to go to Mephibosheth and share how the king was going to show him kindness. David did not have to talk to Jonathan’s son face to face. No one would have thought less of the king had he merely sent messengers. Any act of kindness to the former king’s line would have been viewed as an exceptional act of grace in itself. But David chose to have Mephibosheth brought to him so he could announce to him personally how he was going to show him kindness.

To Mephibosheth, the grandson of an enemy, David restored Saul’s estate and provided for its care. But even more astonishing, David gave Mephibosheth a permanent seat in which to dine at the table with the king. Mephibosheth surely approached King David with some fear for his life, and he considered himself a “dead dog” in his presence. But now he was the master of an estate and honored as royalty in the palace. Is there a better picture of grace?

How does this passage reveal the upside-down nature of God’s grace in the gospel?

Voices from Church History

“Love through me, Love of God; Make me like Thy clear air Through which, unhindered, colors pass As though it were not there. Powers of the love of God, Depths of the heart Divine, O Love that faileth not, break forth And flood this world of Thine.”

–Amy Carmichael (1867-1951)
Point 3: The king provides a seat of honor at his table (2 Sam. 9:11-13).

11 Ziba said to the king, “Your servant will do all my lord the king commands.” So Mephibosheth ate at David’s table just like one of the king’s sons.

12 Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. All those living in Ziba’s house were Mephibosheth’s servants. 13 However, Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem because he always ate at the king’s table. His feet had been injured.

For as long as David was king, Mephibosheth would always have access to him and reap all the benefits of being at the royal table. There was no higher honor anyone living in Israel could have received. David, a powerful king in the world, treated this outsider, the grandson of his enemy, as one of his own sons. We have to remember that Mephibosheth did nothing to earn or deserve this blessing. He received all the benefits that David’s sons received solely by an act of the king’s grace.

Adoption: Adoption into God’s family is one the positive benefits of justification. Not only are we pardoned from the judgment against us through justification, but we also experience a change of identity—we become children of God. Through adoption our ________________ with God, which was once lost through the fall, is now restored, resulting in the benefits of being an ____________ of God and a ______________ with Christ.

By adoption, believers are welcomed to dine at the Father’s table. Christians enjoy full access and fellowship with God, symbolized now, in part, through the Lord’s Supper. But there is still more to come. At present we remain in a fallen world that is under the curse of sin. But one day the curse will be lifted at our King’s second coming, and then we will dine forever with one another at His table (Isa. 25:6-8, cf. Rev. 19:6-9). At the end of history, there will be a feast unlike any we have experienced. We will be with our God, clothed in our Brother’s righteousness, all physically restored, dining at our Father’s table forever.

What are some ways we should respond to the grace of God in our adoption into His family?
My Mission

Because we have received God’s kindness in salvation through Jesus, we extend kindness to others so that they may see the greater kindness of God and become part of His family.

- What does God’s grace in adoption through faith in Jesus spur you on to do?
- How can your group serve those who feel useless or who struggle with physical challenges?
- What acts of kindness will you perform this week to point others to God’s greater act of kindness in sending Jesus to save sinners?

Voices from the Church

“This story ... spurs us on to deeds of unreserved kindness, for it reflects what Jesus has done for us. He is our Saviour at whose table we partake of his sacrificial gift of bread and wine.”

—Jerald Mall
As Saul’s son, Jonathan was the rightful successor to the throne. From a worldly perspective, he was the next in line to become the king of Israel, and with it would come great wealth and power. But God does not operate according to humanity’s expectations or customs. He had chosen David, not Jonathan, to succeed Saul. Jonathan knew it and Jonathan accepted it.

As Jonathan and David prepared to part ways, the question Jonathan asked David assumed something important: that David would be king, not him. In asking David to show kindness, he was acknowledging that David would be in a more powerful position to offer that kindness. Jonathan recognized that he and his family would stand or fall at the whim of David, his friend.

There are times in our lives when God does the unexpected. There are times when what we feel we have earned or what we feel we deserve goes to another. Perhaps we are passed over for a job promotion. Maybe our adoption is denied. Or it might be that a good friend becomes a better friend with someone else. Whatever it is, we will find ourselves in the same position as Jonathan. Will we resist God; will we fight and push back, digging in our heels over what we feel we deserve? Or will we trust God, yield to Him, and acknowledge that His ways are higher than ours?

How should Christ’s humbling Himself and dying a death He did not deserve shape the way you feel about what you have earned or deserve in life?
Day 2: Read 2 Samuel 9:1-5

No one may have known of David’s promise to Jonathan to be kind to his family. It had been made many years before and most likely extended in privacy. Further, it was a promise most people would have understood David breaking, or at least forgetting about. But that wasn’t what David did. When he could finally turn his attention to the internal affairs of the kingdom rather than defending Israel from external threats, David proactively sought out someone from Jonathan’s family to show kindness to.

We should take note of David’s integrity in the moment, but we should only pause there, not stop there. As we read this account, we need to read it through a gospel lens, one that forces us to relate with Mephibosheth, not King David. We were like Mephibosheth, spiritually lame and in desperate need of the King’s mercy and kindness. The beautiful thing is we didn’t have to go to Him to receive such kindness. We couldn’t. Instead, like David, God proactively came looking for us. And when He found us, He heaped such kindness upon us that we never could have hoped for.

What is your emotional response to considering how God came looking for you?

Day 3: Read 2 Samuel 9:6-10

This chapter focuses almost entirely on the actions of David, and it should. But what little we see of Mephibosheth is still instructive. Twice Mephibosheth paid homage to David (vv. 6,8), and his words matched his posture: He was David’s servant (v. 6) who considered himself to be a “dead dog” before his king (v. 8). If we had to summarize Mephibosheth in this account, we would probably describe him as being humble and in fear.

Now, we need to keep that picture in our minds as we think about coming before God—the King of kings, the One who is not just powerful but omnipotent, the One who does not just have authority over a nation but is sovereign over all creation. How do we enter His presence? Not with fear but with bold confidence (Heb. 10:19), not because we aren’t “dead dogs”—indeed, we are, spiritually—but because of what Christ has done in our place. Because Christ has taken our sin and given us His righteousness, we approach God not merely as His servants but as His beloved children.

Why is it incorrect to come before God with fear? How about overconfidence?
Day 4: Read 2 Samuel 9:11-13

David’s act of kindness was extravagant. With one spoken edict, Mephibosheth had become a wealthy man. His grandfather Saul’s estate was restored to him and David had given him servants to work the fields. But most surprising of all, Mephibosheth would eat at the king’s table like one of his sons. This is the high point of the narrative, the perfect place to put one’s pen down or move to the next chapter. But that is not how the account ends. Instead, we read the anticlimactic “His feet had been injured.”

Why return to this seemingly insignificant detail? Perhaps this concluding sentence is there merely to remind us of how unlikely an event this was, to remind us of the fall and rise of Mephibosheth. Perhaps another reason is to remind us of whom we are supposed to relate to in the story—not David but Mephibosheth. Perhaps we are to remember how great of a fall and rise we have experienced in Christ Jesus—how He extended kindness and grace to us when we were spiritually hopeless and helpless. Perhaps the story ends where our application is supposed to begin.

How do you tend to read the stories in Scripture: through the lens of the hero or through the lens of the ones in need of a hero? How should our understanding of the gospel shape how we read?

Day 5: Read Ephesians 2:1-10

Many Bibles label 2 Samuel 9 as “David’s Kindness to Mephibosheth.” And for good reason, but once again, this heading is a helpful reminder that our task of reading and studying Scripture is not to stop until we get to Jesus. We are not simply to consider David’s kindness and move on to chapter 10 because this passage points us to Jesus. Ephesians 2:1-10 sheds light on how 2 Samuel 9 points us to Jesus. After confronting us with our sin problem in verses 1-3, verse 4 begins with two words: “But God.” What follows is a summary of the work of Christ and salvation by grace through faith in Him.

Did you see how the display of God’s “immeasurable riches of his grace” is described in verse 7? That’s right: “his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” It is often easy to see how the Old Testament helps us read the New Testament, but there are also times, like this one, where the New Testament helps us read and see the beauty of the Old.

In what ways has God showed you His kindness beyond salvation this week?
Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- The king looks for someone to whom he may show kindness (2 Sam. 9:1-5).
- The king restores a lost estate (2 Sam. 9:6-10).
- The king provides a seat of honor at his table (2 Sam. 9:11-13).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

When you first became a Christian, did you feel like a recipient of kindness from God? From the church? How does this feeling compare with how you feel toward God and the church today?

What steps can you as a group/local church take to help meet the needs of the disabled to show them God’s grace in Christ and communicate their identity as an image-bearer of God?

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UNIT 10

SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

UNIT 11

SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

SESSION 5

SESSION 6

UNIT 12

SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4
In this volume of *The Gospel Project*, we cover the roughly one hundred and twenty years of Israel’s heyday: the united monarchy. After decades of the devastating cycle of sin and deliverance and being ruled by a series of judges, the Israelites called on Samuel to appoint a king for them—one like those of the nations around them. God warned His people that what they were requesting would lead to heartache and trouble, but they insisted. So God, in His kindness, gave them what they wanted in order to teach them to trust Him.

What followed was a series of three kings: Saul, David, and Solomon, each ruling for about forty years. In some ways, these kings provide us with examples to follow: the fierce determination of David not to stand for anyone impugning God’s character; the mercy and kindness David showed to a foe and his family; the wisdom of Solomon. But we also discover that each of these three men fell woefully short of being the king God’s people wanted and needed, each one proving God’s warnings true. Bookending God’s people crying out as one for a king at the start of this volume, by the time we finish, we encounter God’s people being divided into two kingdoms.

Our takeaway is clear: The hope of humanity does not rest in any human king or leader but is fixed solely and securely in the King of kings, Jesus Christ. But at the same time, we see that God delights in using His people despite their failings. God would fulfill His covenant with David, even though he committed adultery and murder. This reaffirmed the promises God had made to Abraham generations before. And though Solomon would succumb to polygamy and idolatry, God used him to build the temple, a place for God’s people to worship and be in relationship with God.

So consider as you study: What might God do through us?